

REMARKS

At the outset, the Examiner is thanked for the thorough review and consideration of the pending application. The Office Action dated March 9, 2007 has been received and its contents carefully reviewed.

By this Response, claims 3 and 15 are amended, and claims 8, 16, 18, and 19 are cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. No new matter has been added. Claims 3-7, 9, 11-15, and 17 are pending in the application. Applicant kindly requests reconsideration and withdrawal of the objection and rejections in view of the following remarks.

As a preliminary matter, as stated in Applicant's response to office action filed on January 16, 2007, claims 16 and 17 are identified on page 8 of the Office Action as objected to. However, claims 16 and 17 are also included in the rejection of claims on pages 5-7 of the Office Action, and claims 18-19 are indicated as objected to in the Office Action Summary. At this stage of prosecution, Applicant will continue to assume the Examiner has incorrectly objected to claims 16 and 17 on page 8 of the Office Action, and that claims 18-19 contain allowable subject matter. Should Applicant's assumption regarding the objection to claims 18-19 be incorrect, Applicant respectfully requests the opportunity to address the proper objection/rejection in a corrected Office Action.

In the Office Action, claims 3-6 and 8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,078,375, issued to Matsumoto et al. (hereafter "Matsumoto") in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,122,032, issued to Mihara (hereafter "Mihara") in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,977,562, issued to Hirakata (hereafter "Hirakata"). Claim 3 has been amended to include all of the features of claims 8 and 18. As claim 18 was indicated as being allowable, claim 3 and claims 4-7 and 9 that depend from claim 3 are allowable.

In the Office Action, claims 7-12, 15 and 16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Matsumoto in view of Mihara in view of Hirakata and further in view of Japanese Application No. JP 09-325328, issued to Hakoda et al. (hereafter "Hakoda").

U.S. Application No.: 10/824,598
Amendment dated June 11, 2007
Reply to Office Action dated March 9, 20007

Attorney Docket No.: 8734.292.00

Applicant notes claim 10 was previously cancelled. Claim 15 has been amended to include all of the features of claims 16 and 19. As claim 19 was indicated as being allowable, claim 15 and claims 11-14 and 17 that depend from claim 15 are allowable.


Applicant believes the foregoing amendments and remarks place the application in condition for allowance and early, favorable action is respectfully solicited.

If for any reason the Examiner finds the application other than in condition for allowance, the Examiner is requested to call the undersigned attorney at (202) 496-7500 to discuss the steps necessary for placing the application in condition for allowance. All correspondence should continue to be sent to the below-listed address.

If these papers are not considered timely filed by the Patent and Trademark Office, then a petition is hereby made under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136, and any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. § 1.136 for any necessary extension of time, or any other fees required to complete the filing of this response, may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-0911. Please credit any overpayment to deposit Account No. 50-0911. A duplicate copy of this sheet is enclosed.

Dated: June 11, 2007

Respectfully submitted,

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